

THE CAROLINA FARMER

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One Dollar a Year.

The Parcels Post.

Do Our Congressmen Represent us or the Express Company and Big Business.

On the editorial page of the Statesville Landmark of March 19th, appears the following: "Merchants who are alarmed about the parcels post bill, which they not unnaturally think will give an advantage to the mail order houses, may calm their fears so far as the measure now before Congress is concerned." Writing to a constituent who had expressed concern about the bill, Congressman Page of the Seventh District, says:

"The truth is, I think you have been misinformed entirely as to the provisions of this bill and the effect of the legislation proposed. The bill merely puts into operation the schedule of rates that is effective between the United States and foreign countries by which merchandise can be transported for twelve cents a pound and is limited to a package of twelve pounds.

"Now to show you that this can not possibly hurt you by the mail order houses, you only have to make a little calculation to show that it is twice as high as present express charges. On the other hand the bill provides that originating on the rural free delivery routes, the rates shall be five cents a pound for the first pound, and two cents a pound for each additional pound, which will give you and every other local merchant an opportunity to reach your customers in the country.

"The people who have been most zealous for the parcels post bill are not, it should be said, satisfied with this measure. They want the mails to do much of the business now done by the express companies but at a much lower rate."

I wonder if Congressman Page and other Congressmen are equally as frank with their farmer constituents who write them and ask that they advocate and vote for a general parcels post bill? It hardly probable. The majority of representatives in Congress are non-committal on bills that they are opposed to, when writing constituents who favor the bills. They write courteous replies, dealing in generalities and promise to give the matter "due consideration when it comes up."

Congressman Page's letter to his merchant constituent is interesting in that it shows not only the operations of the parcels post bill but the intent of Congress. We would infer that there is no intent on the part of Congress to give the people any relief from the robbery of the express companies. The general rates provided in the bill "is twice as high as present express charges." Fellow farmers, isn't that an outrage on a patient, long forbearing people? Is it not an insult to our intelligence? Congress would not only give us a stone when we ask for bread, but, presuming on our ignorance, would actually try to make us believe it is bread. BIG BUSINESS must not be molested. The intelligent organized mercantile class must be catered to. But the farmers will be fed on garden seeds,

farm bulletins, long speeches and nice letters. I for one am getting tired of that kind of diet.

Why is it that the agricultural class, which is the strongest numerically in the country, can not secure legislation to relieve it from oppressive conditions that are unjust, if the needed legislation is detrimental to any other class? Why should not the strongest class dominate our law making bodies? One reason is that we permit other classes to furnish the men who are to represent us in our law making bodies, and too often these men are not identified with our interests or in sympathy with our condition. A majority of our National Congress are men who are or have been corporation attorneys. It is but natural that these men should be more concerned about the interests of the classes that they have been identified with. But they will do our bidding if we make our demands in no uncertain tones and persist therein. And here is where we have "fallen down" in the past. We have never marshalled our full strength and made a united, determined fight for any reform legislation in the interest of our class. Whenever we do this our demands will be granted, or,—we will choose men who will represent our interests rather than corporate interests.

Now why should we not have a general parcels post such as Germany has, where an eleven pound package can be sent across the empire for twelve cents. All of the leading countries of the world have such a parcels post, except the United States. Our government is responsive to the interests of Big Business rather than to the will of the people.

A parcels post like that of Germany would benefit both the city and country people. It would bring producer and consumer of food products closer together and lessen the cost of living.

The merchants are fighting the parcels post, claiming that it would subject them to the competition of the mail order houses. I do not believe any local merchant's business would be hurt by a general parcels post. The rural classes do not buy anything until they need it and then they want to see it and "feel of it" and try it on before paying for it.

But suppose we admit for the sake of argument that the mail order houses would become competitors of the local merchants. Can not the local business man compete with the city house five hundred to one thousand miles away? He evidently thinks that he can not do it. Why? Isn't it because he is not satisfied with a reasonable profit? Or is it because of the round-about expensive system of distribution that obtains in the commercial world? A system whereby commodities are handled by two or three agencies instead of one. If this be true, why do not the merchants in their organized capacity inaugurate a reform movement that will change the present system and lead to

the adoption of an economical one? If they will not do this, then where is the justice in requiring nine-tenths of the people to pay tribute to one-tenth in the form of unnecessarily high prices in order to maintain an expensive method of doing business? There are too many men engaged in mercantile pursuits. There is hardly a railroad town in the State with a thousand or more population that has not a greater number of merchants than necessary. This does not lead to competitive underselling. The price of nearly all manufactured products is fixed by monopoly or the trade on a common level. Patronage is won by clever advertising, a good display of wares, courteous treatment, etc.

Why should the public be forced to maintain express companies at a cost that is but little better than highway robbery? Why should not the railroads do this work as they now carry the heavy freight. Why not have passenger train freight and freight train freight and both at just and equitable rates. The average cost per ton for delivering freight is less than one dollar. The average cost per ton for delivering express is more than thirty dollars per ton. And yet the representatives of the people (?) in Congress will do nothing to relieve the situation.

A man prominent in State politics and well-known throughout the State, told me a year or more ago that one of the Congressmen from North Carolina was drawing three salaries; one as representative of the people (?) in Congress, one as attorney for a rail-road and one as attorney for an express company. Do not ask me to name the man. The gentleman did not volunteer to give his name, and I did not ask him. If you want to know whether it is the Congressman from your district, write to him.

In conclusion let me say, there is a community interest that should unite all classes for the common good. The church, the schools, morality, temperance, good roads, etc., all represent the progress and life of any community. There should be no division here.

But in business matters there is some conflict of interest between the different classes. The seller wants to sell in the highest market; the buyer wants to buy in the lowest market. The money lender wants a high rate of interest; the money borrower wants a low rate of interest. But even here the different classes should get together on an equitable basis that is fair to all. We would thus eliminate as far as possible all clashing and friction. Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right.

Candor compels me to say that little or no effort has been made to harmonize class differences. The merchants are organized and offering no concessions. Middle men continue to multiply, both between the farmer and the consumer or manufacturer and between the manufacturer and consumer. As a result, the farmers are going to put into operation a plan of their own through the medium of the Carolina Warehouse, Incorporated.

(Continued on page 9.)